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Exile Vol. XXXIV No. 1

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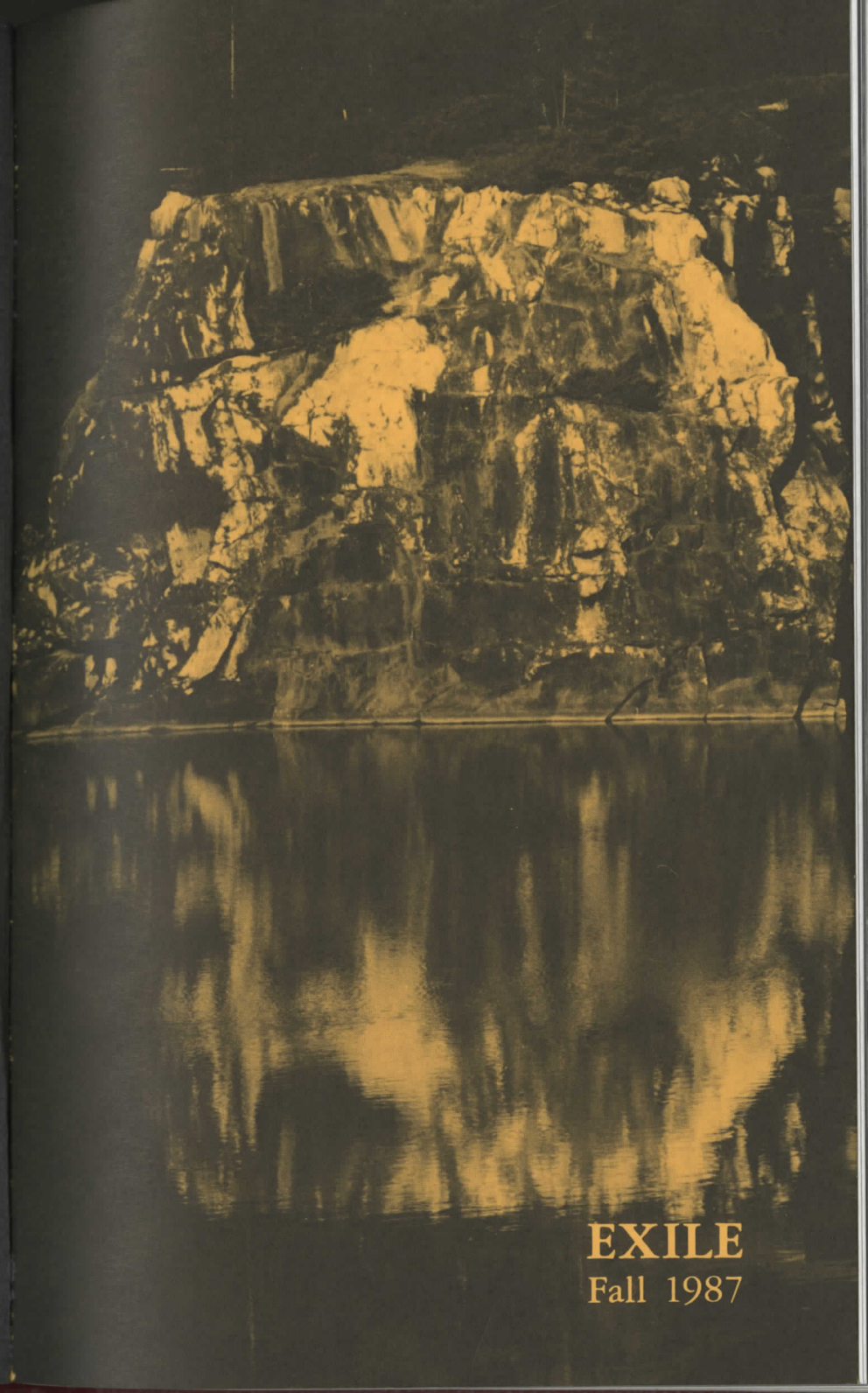
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Exile Vol. XXXIV No. 1

Authors

Kent Lambert, David Zivan, Melissa Wellington, Lauren Williams, Cam Martin, Chris Rynd, Rosemary Walsh, and Zachary Smith



EXILE
Fall 1987

EXILE
Denison University's
Literary Magazine

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You of the finer sense,
Broken against false knowledge,
You who can know at first hand,
Hated, shut in, mistrusted:

Take thought:
I have weathered the storm,
I have beaten out my exile.

Ezra Pound

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New Arrival

Be born then,
Mortally wounded from the start.
Bind the universe to blood and sinew
Constricting infinity to fit into a point of view.
And then wonder—
Will the universe vanish in your passing.

Kent Lambert

Le Sacre Du Printemps

on the first performance

Even as the opening strains began,
the passionate crowd still chattered
and lurched among themselves,
wondering at the ornate interior
and waiting to bring judgment there.

The voicing and the mixing of the meters
flung themselves into the jeering audience,
and they, rejecting sounds too new
even in Paris, (even there!), threw words
and vegetables designed to save the art of sound.

Backstage, the spectacled and serious man
bloodies his knees while crawling out a window
and, falling to the ground, scrapes his palm.
Heart racing at a fast but even breathless pace,
he walks toward the dark and calming river.

David Zivan



A Cry For Life

Indulge yourself
In the miracle of ordinary things:
The music of the universe
Which has pulsed for aeons of time.

You fools,
Who stand in awe
Of your own imaginations,
Making the creatures of your own fancy your gods,
Awake to the sting of consciousness
Like the air that is slowly rising
Clearing the clouds from the sky.

Your laws stand
Glittering refuges of sterile recriminations
Towering over the vastness of the virgin snow
Men made wolves
Enforcing laws bereft of primeval authority
Or appeal to the faintest conscience.

Only self condemnation
May break the shackles of the idolic splendor
Of your barren laws.
Your fear of death removes your fear of God
And you blunder through creation
Like a stray dog through the snow.

You cannot tell—
Either cloud drifts or clouds of snow—
Drowned in a shipwreck
Weighed down by water-laden wings
You never learned to use—
reflections of the clouded red light of dawn
Quivering on the surface
Of the fast moving water
That rushes over your head.

The Earth shifts under the feet of your dreams:
The sky (chameleon), detailed — minutely accurate . . .
Ravens over a small grove of trees
You struggle in the thickets—
The rhythm is lost in empty clashes
With some strident noise from below.

And ultimately
In our naive knowledge,
Unbound as the boundless desires of mankind
And fertile as our souls—
In a godlike embrace of infinite vision—
The simple miracles of experience
Beget the greatest miracles of all.

Kent Lambert



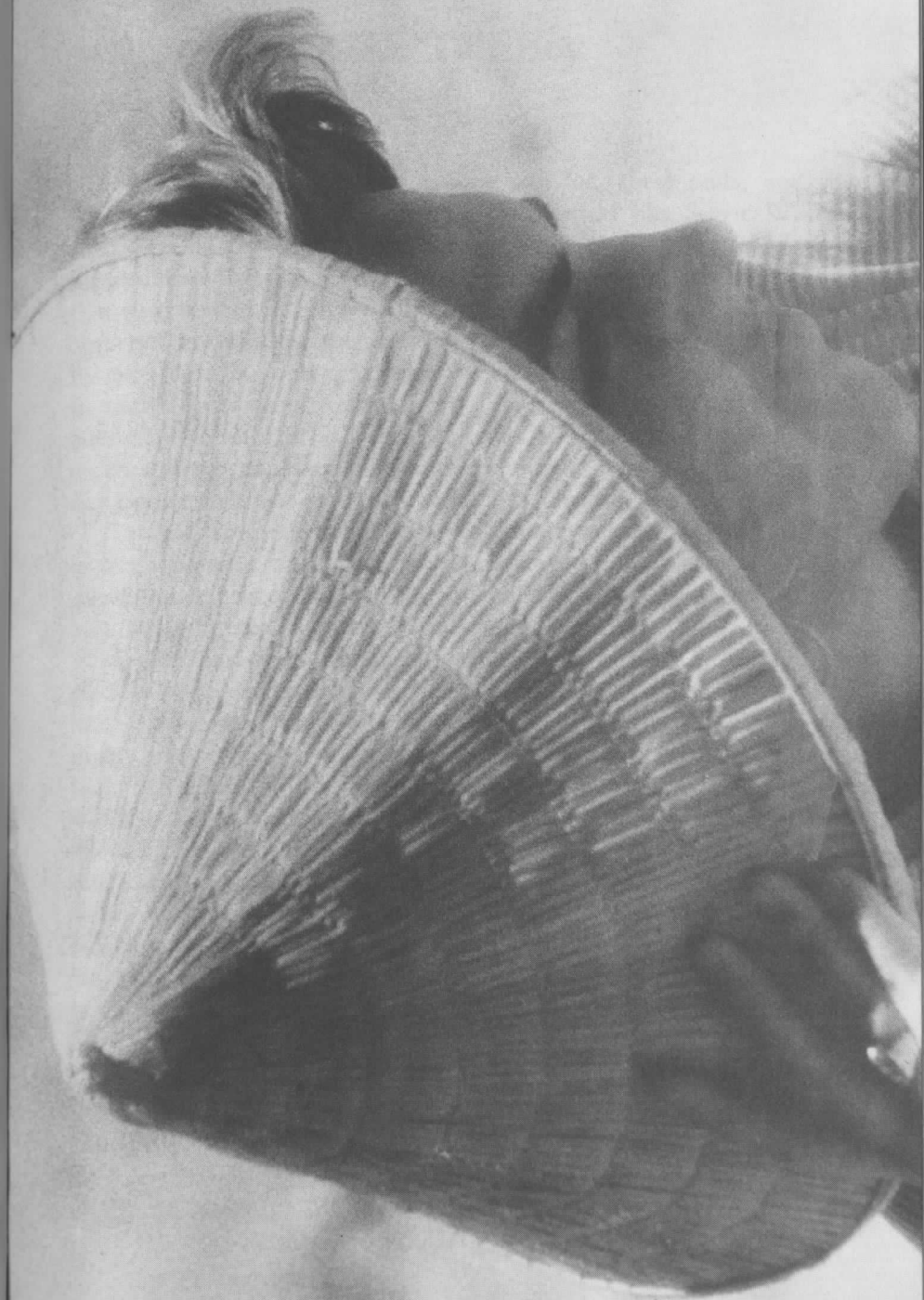
Crazy Circle

The fox seemed to stare
at me, hungry in the bottom
of a smashed-up box.
Its silvermoon fur
stood out among all
the hastily stacked books,
crates of plate, and racks
of faded clothing.
I needed
to have it for my own.
So my grandmother made
the secret auction-motions
and the fur wrap
belonged to me.
As she went on bidding
I sat quietly
admiring the fur's
ancient perfume, the false
glitter of its eyes,
the feel of bones still
inside delicate paws, and most
of all the clever
clip of a mouth
that let the fox bite
its own tail and run
a crazy circle
around a new set of shoulders.

Melissa Wellington

Crazy Circle

The fox seemed to stare
at me, hungry in the bottom
of a snatched-up box
its silvermoon fur
stood out among all
the hastily stacked books,
crates of plates, and tins
of faded clothing.
I needed
to have it for my own.
So my grandmother took
the secret auction-instructions
and the fox wrap
belonged to me.
As she went on holding
I too quietly
when the fox's
ancient perfume, the faint
glitter of its eyes,
the feel of bones still
inside distant paw, and now
of all the clever
tip of a nose
that for the fox den
in new red and blue
a crazy circle
around a new set of shoulders.



The Tall Boy

They were shiny black, supple and fat, these seals, and they basked on the stones looking for all the world like Stevie Wonder, their heads lolling back, eyes closed, rocking and swaying gently to some distant music. He watched them as he leaned over the railing that dug coldly into his belly almost splitting him in two. He was absorbed by the seals, their black wetness and their rhythm. He rocked his own head back in sympathetic imitation but something told him he wasn't the same as these creatures. The swaying of the seals reminded him of other things he'd seen, of films. Dark women balancing jars on their heads could sway like this. It was a rhythm he could almost feel but never quite catch up with. The boy was fascinated.

It was barely spring. Every so often a gust of air, warm and heavy as dog's breath, would puff by reminding the woman that soon she could put her wool sweaters in storage. She stood at the information area studying the layout of the zoo. Every minute or so she would glance nervously back to where her boy stood watching the seals. Her glances had a secretive hooded nature. The boy seemed rather tall for her to be so anxious. The boy was tall but his skin glowed a bit too pink. His scalp showed rosy through the rows of his short cropped hair, the color of a flashlight lit behind the palm of a hand. His face was very round and smooth. It seemed still fetal to her and she worried. She wanted him to never have to be embarrassed. She could see that his beauty was that of a newborn still wet with its mother but she worried that the rest of the world would demand that tall things come out of the tall boy. She called the boy to her and he ran up the paved sidewalk and stood panting, fingers automatically touching her arm, her blouse, as happy to see her as if it were the first time he'd seen her that day. It was always this way, his feelings were direct. He didn't know how to be embarrassed. He loved this woman that was his mother. When he looked at her she filled his life just as the seals had filled it a moment ago.

The woman and the boy walked together toward the long low dark building that stretched quietly through a grove of trees. It said Reptile House on a snake shaped sign over the door. The sign was a green cartoon snake, a caricature of a snake with purple fangs, body curving in a gentle inchworm motion so that the letters had to follow, up and down, a rollercoaster frozen. Nobody screamed inside the house that she could hear. They drifted towards the dark opening under the grinning snake. She kept his attention with her voice, now singing, now talking aloud to herself, to him. He always listened, always wanted to see into her eyes when she spoke, making their walk a rather strange movement — she straight ahead while he crab-leapt sideways trying to see her face. His eyes were the wide open flat blue of finger paint.

She saw a sign on the wall of the Reptile House: there was going to be an interview with one of the snakekeepers. She told him. Did he understand "interview"?

"Innerview" he repeated, very sure of himself. "Pictures of what's inside." It took her a moment to figure that one out. When she spent a long time with him his definitions and his world seemed so right and she felt somehow guilty trying to explain what really was. She agreed that pictures of the insides of snakes would be very interesting, probably much more insightful into the snake world than the zookeeper would be, but that that wasn't what an interview was. He didn't care once he got inside and saw the first snake.

"Huge" he said, without noise, mouthing the round word with respect. The snake was draped heavily relaxed over its piece of driftwood, a sleeping giant. "Huge." The boy formed the word again. The woman encircled the boy's arm with two fingers and then smiling, pointed to the snake behind the glass. "Big as your arm." He made a circle with his own free hand and clamped it quick, tight, smiling, around her arm so that they were locked together, face to face. Then the boy got excited, red-faced, head bobbing, wanting to dance in this circle they had created together. The woman let her hand slide from his warm arm. "Not here."

The building was too warm. She didn't understand how even a snake could resist breaking out in a sweat. But they didn't. They slithered dry and persistent and perfect behind glass walls. Their colors and patterns, clown-makeup, paisley perfect, seemed somehow a mockery of what they were. The deceptiveness of the smiling snakes and the fetid wet heat smell of the other people began to make her nervous. The boy had moved on from the first snake. Now he had his face pressed nose-grease close up to the glass of a cage. On the other side

a boa with a head as large as a fist slept unaware. The boy stared hard, content to stay crouched and nose to the glass for hours, willing the snake to open his eyes, flick his maroon tongue, give him an innerview.

The boy had never shed the wonder of a three year old. There was always something worth staring at, asking about. The whys and whats could sometimes be overwhelming. She had fooled him once. Tricked him. She had the garage door opener in her pocket and she told him to say the magic word. When he did, she pressed the button, sly and smug with her own humor. The door folded open as the boy's lower jaw flopped down in amazement revealing the wet black cavern of his mouth. A perfect joke. He said the magic word again and she pressed the button again closing the garage. The boy's eyes were wide open, almost painfully wide. He turned them, blue and flat, to look at her expecting her to share his awe. The woman closed her own eyes feeling somehow shamed. For weeks after the boy had stood talking to the garage door, coaxing the blank wall to move with the sound of his voice, soft and unceasing and patient. It should have worked. The woman eventually had the electric opener system removed. She couldn't stand to use it.

"Go now." The woman spoke soft and shallow standing behind the boy's back. She put a powder cool hand on the red exposed skin of the boy's neck, prying him from the snake's cage as if plucking at a delicate tree frog. "Go?" He turned to face the woman. She nodded, lips tight, suddenly very insistent that they leave. To relieve the bewildered look on his smooth face she promised that they would go to the Primate House next.

"Primate House" he echoed with wonder and trust. They stepped into the fresh air outside the heat of the Reptile House. She felt as cool and clean as if she had slipped between fresh white sheets. She would have liked to stand in the air without thoughts but the boy was touching at her, clinging with his white smooth perfectly formed fingers. He wanted to see the apes and she had promised.

The Primate House was warm in a different way. The heat seemed to radiate from the apes themselves rather than the heating system. The odor was browns and reds, warm and charged with a lingering sexuality. The woman ran her finger between her turtleneck and her throat to relieve the disturbing heat. It didn't help. The air was the temperature of blood and her eyes stung. The boy suffered none of the woman's discomfort. His face was lit yellow white watching the monkeys gyrate in their cages.

Children were all around clustered in front of the cages, pushing and pulling and squealing, coiled tight, tense with excitement watch-

ing the monkeys leap and tail grab so close to them. The apes seemed to hold some special magic for the children, inspiring them as birds and tigers and arctic foxes never would. The boy joined a group of children in front of a cage filled with very long tailed monkeys. The tails were so long and able they seemed like an extra paw. Their tiny faces seemed mean to the woman, the eyes glittered like dark African jewels. Her boy's eyes were so blue and so pale and clear. She shuddered. The boy was with the other children. A rainbow of t-shirts, they all stood close feeding off of each other's excitement as they imitated the antics inside the cage.

The woman moved to another cage keeping watch on the boy from the corner of her eye. She turned to look into the face of a much taller ape, a female. The face was almost comical, as if drawn on by a crazed captor. But the eyes seemed sorrowful to the woman, ashamed. They were the eyes of a woman forced to dance naked in front of her kidnappers.

These taller apes moved quietly, shoulders rounded, casting shy embarrassed glances at the blank walls. Their fur looked soft and sparse like the downy hair of an old man with the same pink skin below. But it was the hind ends of these apes that made them different, grotesque, drawing some people near and making others turn away. The rumps were inflamed angry pink and swollen out of proportion to their bodies, skin bumpy like a gourd. The apes walked toe-in to accommodate for this condition. The woman, watching them move behind the glass wall, was reminded of large-breasted girls in gym class and the shame they all shared.

She broke her gaze when the boy touched at her elbow asking why. "Why are those ones different?" She didn't really know. But she did know that she wanted to leave the building. "It's too warm in here for Mommy. Let's go to the petting zoo?" She asked instead of telling and he nodded, up and down, too much, wanting to see the black eyes happy. The woman took the boy's sticky warm palm into her dry worried hand and wove the fingers together until they were comfortable.

"Ice cream later?" She felt a little guilty. He had been having fun watching the monkeys. They walked out of the Primate House into bright light, like coming out of a daytime movie. At the side of the building a small girl was throwing up into the bushes. Her mother stood next to her, one hand holding a swollen pink balloon and the other hand stroking the girl's back. The girl was down on all fours arching with each retch like a cat that has swallowed too much of its own fur. The woman kept walking with the boy, hoping he wouldn't

notice. He would notice. She knew that he would; he noticed everything around him. And he wouldn't know to turn away from something like that. "Don't stare, please don't, don't ever stare," she whispered to him and began to move quickly, half running, fingers clamped tight around the boy's arm.

Lauren Williams

Our Native Images

a collection by Cam Martin

"Dare to crack open
the ink on these pages,
letting the wondrous
creative spirit
leap out at you:
from the source of the silent light,
into the ink on these pages,
into your mind."

"A Fairy Tale"

Paul Palnik

Continuum

I

Cast to the river,
I watch a life
of devotion and virtue
sink ... surface...
only to sink again
as the balance of the flow
compares today,
to yesterday,
to tomorrow —
all at once.

II

An echo from upriver
casts shadows of a life
cruel and malicious.
I swallow truth,
taste justice,
balancing
all there is,
with all there was,
with all there will be —
all at once.

III

A voice downriver
heralds successful lessons,
showing that I learned well
the ebb,
the flow,
contrasting decadence with decency
to adjust today
in light of yesterday
for change tomorrow —
all at once.

Coming of Age

I never had to look
for She was there all along. Inside

this crystalline structure, hollowed
from within like a tunneled labyrinth,
pulses echo from a distant light
to remind and awaken a physical form.

Struggling to surface, silent pleadings
from forgotten space illumine
the black atmosphere smothering
the angelic form of human consciousness. Within,

I traverse, closing my eyes
to the darkness, sinking
to light, across barriers anchored
in the concrete of cultural learning.

A wave of acceptance streams
through me, welcoming me back,
like a child looking outside for freedom
only to find it at home. Within

Vision Quest

Voices veil
my inner eye.

Visions mute
my beating heart.

I startle
from this incoherence,
needled mercilessly
by stabs of hunger
from days of unnourished
walkabout.

Cold air,
painful to the touch,
tears tears
from my skin.

Three moons
I am exposed
to Her changing moods,
Her biting lessons,
Her ultimate wisdom.

Brittle feet
coax a path
beyond sight,
beyond imagination,
over ridges frozen
to a shine
and across sand valleys
breathing heavily
the sun's weight.

At the "Pass of Men,"
She allows me comfort
against a pine
overlooking a journey
one arm in distance.

I dream,
waking a man.

Roused
by Her messenger,
a brave
man stands
to be judged
by teeth gorging
on childhood fears
chased from the darkness
with thunderous roars
into claws lashing
out lightning strikes
to expose hidden radiance
behind a nighted
atmosphere.

I surrender
to a chilling rain
of tears.

I wake,
dreaming a man.

She whispers
a silent gesture
as a final gust
blows over the pass,
leaving me alone,
resting comfortably,
against a pine,
overlooking the journey
of a boy to a man.

Healing Dance

I stand motionless, an idol
of manhood, waiting, resolved
to traverse my afflictive boundary
by going deep, deep within
to an awaiting freedom
and strength.

A lone clap sounds
and the murmurs begin
as benign incantations are breathed
effortlessly to a waiting tempest
hungry for encouragement
and strength.

We move, my brothers
and I, in rhythmic unison:
a dozen pair of bare feet
shuffling unconsciously,
yet always in line,
across hard-packed dust.

Shrieks of encouragement
lash out from the inner circle.
I am resolved
and stomp frantically
the hard pack, boiling up
dust and heat.

Sweat rains down
to quench my inner fire
while the momentum surges round
as thoughts, in the fury, surrender,
stamped to rest deep in the earth
around the fire.

Rooted in my pit,
the num¹ boils red and flows,
coursing swiftly up my spine
as the women clap louder,
pouring forth their souls in song
to make possible the escape.

The trees, the fire,
the earth, the sky, all fuse
to a blurred oneness
before eyes colored
by energy activated
in expanded awareness.

My heart pounds feverishly;
my head tilts back;
and my jaw drops open
as I desperately gulp
mouthfuls of air
to sustain the fury.

We clap, my brothers
and I, in rhythmic unison,
praying for stamina and spirit
to focus the stored energy
from subconscious beckoning
into awaiting receptors.

My eyes open
to see a woman collapsed,
her body writhes with energy
as I kneel to release
my red, healing hands,
to her needs.

¹"num" means spiritual and healing energy in the patois of various African tribes.

Around the fire
the fury blazes.
Men dance and women sing
as the cyclone peaks
to render some helpless
and others empowered.

Kneeling without thought,
I look from the spectacle
to watch my hands,
those radiant red hands,
guide themselves
over her body.

Her spasms subside
as I feel the healing
drawn out from within,
to penetrate her body
and surface in a glowing
veil of protection.

Responding to her smile,
I sing out in triumph
and put my hands together
to support and encourage
the potential for every spark
to become a fire.

Metamorphoses

Above, two butterflies engage,
each mirrored objects of the other.

I never needed to look
to him, for I was he.

The grimace on his face
1. reflects our mutual distaste
of all things green.

Shaken from sleep,
2. I feel adolescence awaken
in the bed next to me.

My laboring pains
3. streak a river of worry
across both faces.

Outside, two butterflies pass,
each aware of the other.

Yet all things change
when glass comes between us.

Our shoulders nearly touch
1. on the final, overcast walk
down decaying corridors.

Seated in silence,
2. his smile grips a heart
swimming in grief.

Through reflective eyes,
3. I look down from above
to a motionless form.

Below, one butterfly progresses,
never to be with the other.

Across bodies grounded in time,
I see me in his eyes.

Seventh Ray Dawning

I

Olive leaves decay
to a painting of grey
plastering a room
with one chair.

This is your making!

II

Bronze shadows
cast in concrete
unstable in foundation
shatter when shaken.

And this is your making!

III

Isolation is comforting
to the estranged.

This is your destiny!

IV

Ambiguous equations; dead
languages; volumes
of repetitious insights:

These point the path
to the real four walls
you construct of pen
for your isolation.

V

Yellowed veil,
not quite white,
conceals from darkness
seven rays of light.

VI

Upon the Sixth Ray
humanity floundered.

Cast adrift
in a sea of ideals,
we grasp security
by exalting ourselves
over others,
standing alone
to promote distinctiveness
and self-acclaim:

manifesting
images of aspects
of whole beings.

VII

Veiled ideals
lift to reveal
Pythagorean synthesis
engaged in a song:

satellites revolve,
systems evolve,
together ...
alone ...
for individual beauty
and universal unity,
knowing that one
without the other
is decayed,
decrepit,
passion-less,
and isolated.

Inner Fire

Ami claps
the hollow reed,
urging forth sparks
of life,
projecting up and out
twisters in the 4 directions
as though bellowed
from the root
of his unquenchable
fire.

Amber eyes
reflect the fire
inside and out.

Captured by a gaze,
I watch Ami
inspire a dance
of sister sparks
who, following a thought,
roll and spin
harmoniously, lending
words to gesture,
sounds to motion,
life to stillness.

[Ami's free hand
carves a silhouette
in the night air
as eyes trace
the vision
of the essence
he has created.]

Liberated
from Ami's gaze,
the sparks are free
to caress
his thought form.

Rejoicing
on the pedestal
of nurturing flames,
the sparks interact ...
only to isolate ...
over the surface
of a sphere
ideal in form,
perfect in intent.

The reed bellows.

Sparks
in the flaming refuge
flush from cover
to cyclone upwards
in a celestial dance
illuminating the globe
with an energy
transmuting
form to thought,
stillness to life,
darkness to LIGHT!

Inner Flight

Of gusting wings
secure in flight
and the power
of the Four Winds
with common direction,
a native attraction
is subconsciously revealed
in the pulsing cry
of the great White Eagle!

That sound,
that crying siren
of universal alarm
compels me to aspire
beyond shadows and shackles
in the modern age
to re-discover
the wisdom,
the life,
the Earth,
once mine.

I breathe
the wind's intent,
succumbing to the urgency,
and pioneer a path
beyond boundaries yet charted,
through discord and fear,
armed with wisdom
of experience
along the same path,
through lives past.

I am winged
effortlessly to a mound
of memories.

Face to the Earth
I prostrate.
Clenched,
in mournful hands,
I wring the dark soil,
freeing the spirit,
the life,
the blood,
from sacred land
nurtured with the bodies
of brothers and sisters.

Water,
dashed with flecks
of Turquoise,
leaves the body
of soil cupped
to trickle down
wailing arms
sweating tears
for memories,
for sacrifices,
for ancestors.

Sons of the Earth

A council convenes
to appraise
my motives,
my worth,
my soul.

I stand transparent,
posturing before penetrating minds
blind to peacock plumes fanning vanity and fear.

Glances gouge an abyss,
separating flesh from spirit, to liberate
truth coursing within tunneled pathways of light
to the dawning of a soul in life and love.

My imperfections lay painfully exposed
as the body of a man sacrificed by indifference and hypocrisy
stretches anonymously across a nameless plane,
experiencing past and future, to settle in a comforting emptiness.

I have been a child awed by fearless winds howling
laughter to menacing echoes in caves of darkness.

I am a man captivated by landscapes painted to life
with brush strokes in palatable light of the Son's creation.

I will be a wise man educated by reflective waters
murmuring faceless lessons from sources above and below.

At once I am all these. Stretching across time

I extend the arm of my emotions, reaching out to caress
faces endowed with Her majestic beauty and natural wisdom
featured in reservoirs collecting consciousness in pooled Turquoise
swelling with forgiveness to quench a surface thirsty
with scars and lines deep in old age and no longer taut
from years of bitterness and battle.

I will accomplish nothing they have not mastered.
I will compose nothing they have not orchestrated.

I can imagine nothing they do not love.
I can imagine nothing I will not do!

I surrender to knees humbled
by the burden of integrity and sincerity (hovering
weightlessly like a smile
across the faces of a pleased council)
as I prostrate before a native image
reflecting inner nature across a mirror
penetrating muted eyes.

Cam Martin



Psych 100

His throat is burning. We've denied this rat
his food and drink for days. His box is dark,
save when we come to him and hook the light
and lever to the drinking water. We
have shaped him so that he will drink, will beat
the clock and draw our graph for us. I pour
the water in the dish. If I could put
it in his mouth I would. I want to tell
the rat I understand, that Christ who died
for men was thirsty on that desert night,
and wanted human milk to drink, and wept
because of this. The night was cold and windy.
The mother bared her breast and shivered. The baby
nuzzled close. There was nothing to deny.

David Zivan

Routine

In this shadowy corner Edna and Mary would hide, safe as the unborn. It was only for a few minutes. It was only because they were old and it was hot and coffee was their drug. When the boss began stirring in her office they would rise from the tired stuffing of the lounge furniture to gather their buckets and rags. But right now it was still early and still safe. The extra skin hung from Edna's upper arm peaceful as an empty hammock.

Mary smoothed the first rivulet of sweat into her short hair. "I wish it weren't so damned hot. I'm always soaked clean through to my brassiere by breaktime."

"Well, wish in one hand and shit in the other and see which fills up first." Edna was a fortune cookie filled with cheap and generalized insights. Mary didn't answer but held the coffee up to her big loose lips, sacrificing to the morning. Steam rose onto her glasses.

"Edna, will you look at that? Damn elephant ankles. I better not even take 'em off now. I'd never get 'em laced again." Mary's swollen feet seemed out of proportion to the quantity of her flesh. With her heels dug into the carpet, her straight, stiff, protruding legs supported the sack of her body like wooden stilts.

"I don't need to look at your ankles, I got two of my own. Big enough to be four. We should get us some little aerobics shoes like Connie has."

Edna straightened her glasses. Mary and Edna wore the same style glasses — large, pink-toned, with scrollish frames as if snails had spent the night trailing over them. Their hair was short and meticulous and razored neatly in the back where it grew in an upside down V.

"Don't listen to what I just said, Mary. We get tennis shoes like Connie has, we're likely to start painting our pants on each morning."

"You are not kidding." Mary nodded. "That woman can clean with the best of us but I'll bet her personal life would leave you with a bad taste in your mouth."

"Always tickles me when she complains about her damn ulcer."

She's got nothing worse than a case of the hot pants. She wouldn't have room in there for an ulcer, her pants are so tight."

Mary and Edna laughed and the tired lounge chairs gently sighed beneath them. Both women were fat but in different ways. Mary was soft and big with quite a bit of extra skin that wavered like hopeful sails when she spoke. Edna was fat in a compact way, a tiny square-jawed woman who had swallowed too much. Mary plodded, an expansive tiring presence but Edna stayed as sharp as her tongue. Both women had toy poodles at home.

When the coffee was no more than a milliliter of regret in the bottom of the cups Edna and Mary officially started work. Today Edna pushed the cart. It was very square and very metallic and very loaded down. Spray bottles and rags and toilet brushes clung to its sides but it wheeled more like a stretcher than a swaying gypsy cart. Edna and Mary felt the ceremony in what they did. They stopped in front of closed doorways and with comfortable authority and masterkeys let themselves into opposing rooms.

"Lord, it is hot today." Mary flapped the corners of her cleaning smock like a sweaty fat pigeon.

"You think He don't already know that, Mary? Don't know about your Lord, but I'll bet the one I know had a hand in it. We'd better get going, we got this whole floor today."

Edna cleaned with a vigorous hand. She picked up the complimentary disposable ash tray, stuffed it into her garbage sack, swiped the table top with her disinfectant soaked rag, and replaced the tin ash tray with firm disgust. The new tray was a shiny metallic blue, pretty like an exotic goldfish, but Edna didn't notice colors. If she had known that Mary picked out her ash trays by color, stacking and sorting them with pleasure, she would have shaken her little head sadly. Edna just didn't have time for it.

Time went slow with Mary. She sang to herself and walked slow, heel-toe, her feet splayed as she cleaned, ever aware that pay came by the hour. She was an orderly cleaner, wiping the desktops in straight rows neat as the flowerbeds she kept. It was systematic and almost satisfying to take a room from bed-rumpled, towel-damp disorganization to sheet-tight neatness. It was a quiet transformation but it helped Mary forgive the rooms for being dirty. Today she hummed Barry Manilow, letting a "coba" or a "cabanna" roll from her lips in between the gentle thunder. Mary vacuumed neatly, missing whole patches of carpet in her organization. The vacuum was powerful and loud but she had complete control. She finished off the room with a gold ashtray, pretty like a Christmas tree ball, to bring out the tired red of the carpet.

They always seemed to finish at the same time. Just in time to meet over the cart like neighbors over the fence and speak of the spoils of war.

"Anything good so far?" Edna almost always asked, accurate as her watch.

"Nothing but a filthy dirty girly magazine." Mary didn't approve of them no matter how many she threw out. Edna didn't care much one way or the other. "It's either the girl or the next best thing. And we clean it up either way."

Mary's large hand dove into the bucket. Their conversations were generally as repetitious as their days. Big and red with capability, her hands lifted the rag and engulfed it in a tightened fist so the excess water slopped back into the bucket. It was a one-handed action. Edna used both of her smaller hands on her rag, tight like a hawk's claw on a tree. They weren't supposed to take anything from the rooms they cleaned. They weren't supposed to sit in the lounge in the mornings drinking coffee.

Mary used a big bag, plastic-coated like a diaper carrier. Everything would just get thrown out anyway. Edna sometimes used her purse but sometimes she just stashed things on the bottom of the cart. Today she was using the cart.

"Edna, you know that makes me nervous." The skin from Mary's chin jiggled like a harness strap. She wouldn't want anyone talking about her. It was just that they were too old for this sort of thing.

"Mary, we ain't going to jail for a few beach towels and soap slivers. And even if we do it just might be air-conditioned and we won't be the ones cleaning it. Maybe we should try and lift a mink coat and put it on the cart just to make sure we get there."

Mary swallowed but didn't answer. She and Edna were a team.

"Well anyway, they took more than I did. Towels. Bible. Always tickles me how such fine upstanding Christians can stoop to thievery in the name of the Lord."

Edna punctuated by shaking her head. She shook her head a lot. She was a small plaster statue, her oversized head bobbing disgustedly on its spring.

Mary re-wrung her rag. She never knew what to say while Edna was shaking her head. She sensed that Edna didn't even want a reply. Mary's hand in the bucket was slippery with a film of cleaner. Today was Edna's turn with the cart and she had used Forward. Mary preferred Mint. It was milder and smelled like somewhere else. Like anywhere else Mary would rather be at this hour of the day. And even though both buckets looked the same at the end of a day, grey and foul, the

Mint cleaner started out clear and green as pool water.

Edna rolled the cart further down the dingy hall while Mary walked behind pressing a kleenex into the creases of her neck. Her other hand rested at the base of her spine in the stance of pregnancy. It was only Tuesday.

Edna walked square into the middle of her next room, fifth of the day. Seemed to her they were slower than they had been last year but maybe it was just that it was hotter. Edna never sang while she worked, she scolded. "Another towel under the bed. Maybe they think I do Jane Fonda in the morning to get ready for work." She huffed like a kettle as she poked the towel out from under the bed with her mop handle. "Where you headed dustball? I don't have time to follow you around all day. Bad enough I have to follow this belly but I guess if you don't get it coming you get it going." Edna thanked the Lord she had been born clever or she would never have made it through day one. She never missed a corner and she counted down rooms like notches on her belt. Edna never forgave anything for being dirty.

The woman worked through the morning, down the hallway, right into the heavy thick heat of midmorning. Breaktime meant an electric fan and a saturated breeze.

"I've gotta get something into my stomach before I take my pill. And I guess I'll have to have a soda to get it down with, damn horse pill."

"I'll bet the doctor didn't mean a donut when he said to eat something with your pill. Mary, you are running yourself down again just like last summer. Don't you leave me to work with Connie again, she gives me an ulcer just talking about her ulcer."

Mary and Edna smiled together in the artificial breeze. They were louder than they had been in the morning, brave in the legality of their fifteen minute break. Sitting clammy and wet they criticized the large face of Donahue that loomed on the oversized TV screen of the lounge. Mary would have rather watched one of the soaps but Edna liked to keep up on current issues. It was only fifteen minutes anyway. She swallowed and it felt like the pill was taking its time going down.

"I swear he must practice in front of a mirror. Look at that will you, Mary. That man is nothing but theatre. Fake. The way my little granddaughter Bethanne is at parties. Should have seen her at our last get-together. Tickles me to death the way she dances around in and out of everyone's pant legs. Begging for attention. But at least she's cute. Donahue, you are an ugly man. I swear sometimes Bethanne reminds me of my own poodle dancing on her hind legs with that big

pink bow on her head. You've seen that picture of her? Tickles me to death."

Mary nodded. She'd seen Edna's pictures a thousand times if she'd seen them once but she had a dog of her own at home. Chelsey wouldn't wear a bow on her head though. He'd shake it off or pull at it with paws nimble like a tiny monkey's then would look at Mary disgusted.

"Edna, I never can tell if you like Donahue or hate his guts the way you complain about him everyday. Why do you want to watch the old badgering fool anyway? All he ever does is complain. Beats me how you can stand to listen to him complain but let Connie near you and you're like a cat thrown in a pool, drowning in aggravation."

Edna crinkled her little fist around the cellophane cracker wrapper and ignored every comment but those pertaining to Connie.

"You'd better lower it a few notches or old Connie will be in here complaining about something else. And Donahue's over now anyway so heave your heft and let's get at it."

Edna and Mary headed back towards the cart that waited in the dark hallway. They left the lights off to try to fool themselves into believing it was dusk — cool as a day off in the shade. Edna wheeled the cart towards the uncleaned rooms and the women separated once again. The carpet was old ruby red and beaten thin by thousands of feet just passing through. The women's voices volleyed back and forth in the hall like echoes from some strange sport.

"I think it's about time you started talking to the Devil about this heat." Edna was shaking her head, muttering low and muffled. "The Lord may know about it but the Devil's more likely to strike a bargain."

"Edna, you know I'm a Christian." Mary opened her eyes mockingly wide as if Edna had suggested that she eat a box of jelly donuts in the name of the Lord. It could be a useful religion.

"You can call yourself a Christian till the day I catch you stealing a hotel Bible."

Then it was quiet for a long moment while Edna and Mary worked in their respective bathrooms with the shower heads running loud and steaming hot. Water trickled into the dark cave of Edna's upstretched armpit.

Mary sighed and cleared the big looseness of her throat and wiped the humidity from her glasses. She hated bathrooms more than any other part of this job. She could hear Edna scouring emphatically in her room. She closed the door of the bathroom to sweep stray hairs from its corner and a color caught her eye. A blouse hung from the

hook on the back of the door. "Must have been steaming out the wrinkles," thought Mary but she didn't say it. She just looked at the shirt — it was a silky aqua green. It might have fit Edna but it was definitely too small for Mary. Alone in the shower fog, Mary stared at the shirt and then touched a sleeve gingerly, reverently. It rippled with her touch like a pebble tossed into an algae pond. She stopped the rippling, thumb and finger on the corner of the sleeve, letting go slowly. Catching her reflection in the steamed mirror, she thought her eyes seemed dim, filmed over like the protective eyelids of a frog. She closed them and finger pressed her eyeballs deeply into their sockets, trying to push back the heat. With her freckled hand Mary reached for the blouse and shoved it hanger and all into her garbage sack. The hanger protruded from black plastic like a bone trying to break through skin. Edna wouldn't notice. Mary shut off the water making the pipes tremble in the wall and the last of the steam quiver upward. She began to gather up the bleach and grout scrub and bright blue toilet liquid, quickly, sliding water back into the sink with the curve of her free hand. Edna would be in the hall soon. It was getting near lunchtime and everything would just get thrown out anyway.

Lauren Williams

A Man's Descent to Hell

We'd never seen the man before,
whose grizzled beard was full.
But he captured every barroom ear,
as he teetered on his stool.

"When she was gone," his tale began,
"gone far away from me;
I did what foolish young men do
and sold myself to sea.

I toiled and banned all thoughts of her
and half a year went by,
till, at the place where blue meets blue,
land replaced the sky.

A small and jungled watering isle
our tired ship did reach.
And men were rowed to fill our casks,
and I to guard the beach.

Alone I walked the sunlit sands
till sudden did appear
a short and squatting colored man
sat smoking by a fire.

I put my revolver to his head,
but he turned to me and smiled.
He spoke with words so sweet and kind
and bade me sit a while.

His eyes which shone within his head
had fiery tales to tell.
"Come and share a bowl," he said,
"And I will show you hell."

I took the pipe. The graceful smoke
my lungs and head did fill.
Each grain of sand then glowed like gold
and the ocean waves stood still.

That little man then rose to go
and by forest green was swallowed.
Lured by his promise, I left my post
and foolishly I followed.

He lost me with lightning pace,
but my path seemed more wise;
I beheld a place that held not hell,
but wondrous paradise.

A marbled fount of sparkling wine
this place before me filled.
This courtyard touched not by the sun
was lit by fruits and rills.

Beside the fountain was a thing
that made this world more sweet.
For Kubla Khan's unfinished dome,
I beheld complete.

Across the cool, dark grass she lay;
clothed in crimson hair.
I embraced my lady's loving face.
Her flesh was soft and fair.

As if this deed had caused a storm,
a shrieking wind whipped stark.
The flowers wilted all at once.
The wondrous place fell dark.

The marble fountain cracked and fell.
Its ruined wine ran red.
The woman in my arms became
a twisted corpse decayed.

A long and bitter wail escaped
then from my bloodied lips.
I ran then from that wretched place
to my comrades and my ship.

That haunting man spoke true," he said,
"my life this truth has stained.
For hell is love and beauty lost,
to never be regained."

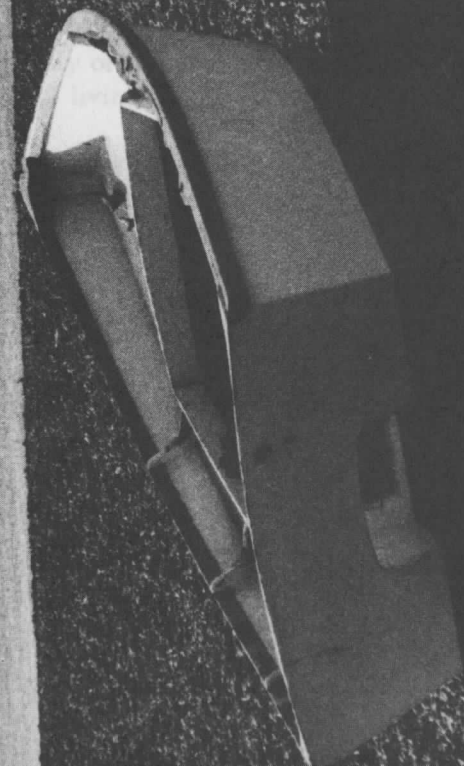
Ale and tears boiled in his eyes.
The barroom silent fell.
"I have been to hell," he cried.
"And, damned, I dwell there still."

Chris Rynd

Separation

Weep not for me, nor for my absence too,
for though we're separated by the sea,
and long to touch despite dividing blue,
remember that each morn I think on thee,
each night when wandering lonely through the stars
I call thine heart, and hope the darkness might
diminish blackened distance, take my message far,
tell thee of my love in words of light.
So laugh, and sometimes even deign to sing,
for by this writing canst thou know anew
that both in stars of night and morning's dew
I see time pass, and with its motion bring
reunion, sweet as summer's freshest dawn,
and thee, grown lovelier since I've been gone.

David Zivan



Passage

And beneath her now rough feet
Are one hundred thousand shards —
Relics of a few broken promises —
That mix with albino sand
And cut her soul until she bleeds like a torn rose pedal.

And above her looms a vengeful sun
That beats down upon her naked back so
Fiercely she can sense the wavering lines
That cower on the horizon like palm boughs,
Shaking as the eye passes over.

And behind her are a half a dozen miles afoot
With a month's supply of full moons spent alone
And a year's worth of living to ride a wave.

And beside every footprint she has made
Lies a small piece of her that she conceded
She could no longer afford to carry.

But ahead of her dances the water
And the sea foam makes lacework against her breasts.

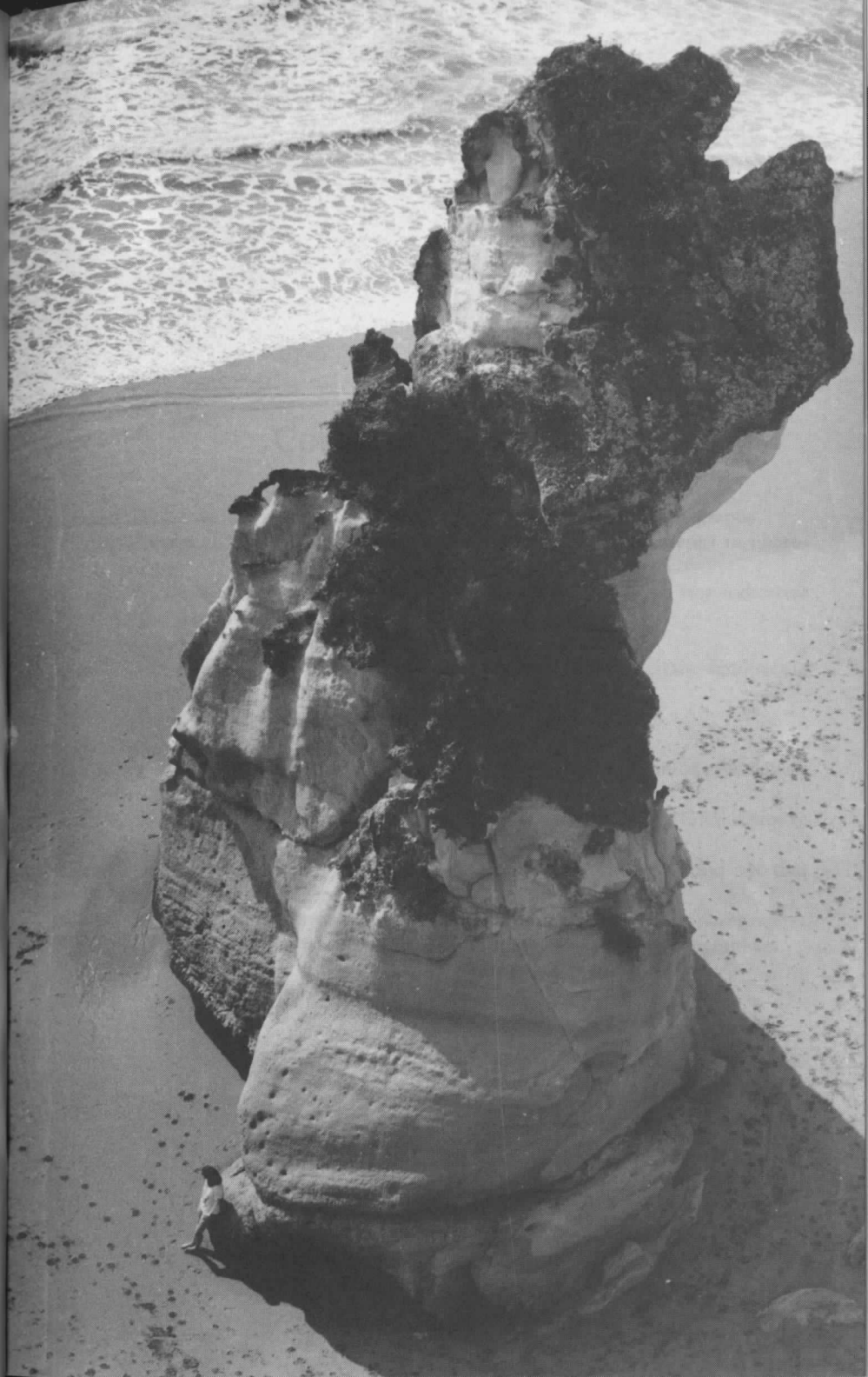
And she runs to it like a long-forgotten child.

Rosemary Walsh

Whales

Drifting, heavysmooth
in the fluid calm
at whalepace. Inspecting
the swaying seaweed,
scattering schools of chumfish,
decorating it all with
mournful music for the harpooned,
living redundantly
peaceful like the waves
they never hear.

Zach Smith



Contributor Notes

Shelley Dickerson is a senior Art major with a concentration in Photography.

Lauren Hannan is a senior Mass Communications major with an interest in photography.

Cynthia Hoag says that the serenity captured in her photo is in no way indicative of the true, inner tempest within the artist.

Kent Lambert is "a very strange and disturbing person."

Cam Martin remains a Renaissance man until the end, despite certain denigrating remarks.

Chris Rynd is just trying not to throw anything too warped.

Zach Smith is alive.

Rosemary Walsh is a junior English major. Contrary to popular opinion, she detests being called Rose.

Melissa Wellington is a senior English major who is waiting for her GRE scores to determine the rest of her life.

Lauren Williams is a senior English major. Somehow her mother found out that she didn't have a senior picture taken.

Grant Young is a senior Psychology major with a lifelong "lust" for photography.

David Zivan is a senior English major. He dedicates these poems to new beginnings.

